

Director of Personnel

Fred:

It has been more months than I can remember since I asked you about upgrading the Medical positions, and I submit a copy of this article as evidence of my earlier wisdom. Let's get on the ball!

Harold

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Cramer's 9 to 4:30 A New Medical Dodge

By John Cramer
Star-News Staff Writer

It should come as no surprise, given the continuing publicity about sky-high incomes in the medical profession.

But the fact is that federal pay schedules are such that government no longer can use them to bid for the services of physicians.

Instead, it must resort to contracting for them.

CLYDE M. WEBBER, president of the AFL-CIO American Federation of Government Employees, told the story in a recent speech to a personnel officer group.

"We are now faced," he said, "with a situation in which medical doctors simply refuse to accept employment with the federal government, either as military personnel or civil service employees."

"One must question whether our personnel policies are designed to drive out of the public career service doctors and other essential professionals. Apparently, the federal government has fallen back on the old contracting ploy with damn the cost to fulfill its need for doctors."

"OUR OFFICE has received complaints from employees in all agencies requiring the services of doctors and auxiliary personnel that the agencies are either contracting for these services, or planning to contract."

"Statistics assembled by the Hederson Manpower subcommittee show that the Department of Defense has increased its contracts for medical services from \$1,278,000 in 1972 to \$318,889,000 in 1973. This increase coincidentally occurred at the time the armed forces lost their authority to draft doctors."

"I have here a memorandum instructing all Army facilities to provide occupational health services by contract, and to plan on obtaining contract services for retired military personnel and their dependents."

Webber pointed out that the memo specified no dollar ceilings on the cost of such contracts.

HE ALSO NOTED that government took a different approach in the face of a potential lawyer shortage several years ago. "Their grades under the General Schedule pay system were elevated two grades for each level of attorneys GS-7 through -9, and one grade for each level above GS-11."

Webber also told of still another kind of personnel shortage.

It involves, he said, the Social Security Administration, which has been growing steadily for eight years

— and consistently underestimating its manpower needs.

But instead of revising its estimates and hiring more employees, it consistently requires its workers to perform expensive overtime.

"**MANY ARE FEMALES** with family responsibilities who object very much to overtime. Many male employees have worked so much overtime in the eight years that they, too, now object. . . . Morale problems have intensified . . . have brought on turnover problems."

His conclusion:

"It seems strange, being as charitable as possible, that the federal government reacts to personnel problems stemming from pay practices in the private sector by making salary adjustments within the merit system in some cases . . . by contracting-out without regard to cost or detriment to the merit system in others . . . and by clinging, in still others, to arbitrary and costly personnel ceilings."

THE CIVIL SERVICE Commission's Board of Appeals and Review (BAR) has put U.S. agencies on notice that they may invoke layoffs, and accompanying downgradings, only as last resorts when federal employee jobs are found to be over-graded.

The decision, stemming from an appeal by Florida Local 888 of the National Federation of Federal Employees, involved a Defense employee, John Smalley, who was downgraded, via layoff procedures, from GS-12 to 11, with his agency, claiming it had abolished the GS-12.

But Smalley's new GS-11 job had precisely the same duties as the 12. And this prompted the BAR to rule:

"**IN ADDITION** to evidence that Smalley's former job was not abolished, the record is replete with evidence that the downgrading resulted from a reclassification of a position to correct a prior classification error, rather than the establishment of a new position."

"Smalley's former position was erroneously classified a grade too high."

"Hence, in an attempt to indicate the alleged improper classification, the agency rewrote the classification description and classified the purported position at GS-11, and attempted to staff it by utilizing reduction-in-force procedures."

The BAR ordered the downgrading canceled. It said Smalley to another GS-12 position before resorting to layoff action.